



TANANA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Maudrey J. Sommer School

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Local Boundary Commission

November 25, 2003

Darroll Hargraves, Chair
Local Boundary Commission
550 W. 7th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501-3510

Dear Mr. Hargraves:

Your November 10 letter sent to the Honorable Donna Folger, Mayor of Tanana, arrived after our November meeting of the Tanana City School District Board of Education, and contained a deadline for submitting comments that is before the December meeting. Thus, it did not allow time for the School Board and the City Council to meet together or separately, to form a reply.

A formal reply containing the Tanana City School District's input concerning school consolidation will be sent when the TCSD Board of Education has met. In the meantime, a few matters should be brought to your attention that have been discussed by the school district's board and administration in the past. The major points that the Boundary Commission may want to consider, if matters must be discussed before the formal reply is received, are that Tanana City School District wishes to stay independent, Tanana is incorporated as a first class city (therefore already contributes to the funding of the schools), Tanana City School District's schools already run as inexpensively as possible, and Tanana's Maudrey J. Sommer School made adequate yearly progress for the school year just reported.

Tanana originally incorporated as a first class city because the residents wished to have local control of their school. That desire has not changed. As a first class city, Tanana has consistently contributed more than the minimum required local effort toward support of the school. As a community, the residents of Tanana contribute to the school in many more ways than just money. There are countless volunteer hours, donations and general support of the school and its activities. The citizens of Tanana own their school and are proud of it. Forced consolidation would take that away from them.

The expenses that keep Tanana City Schools from being able to spend 70% of their budget on instruction are fixed operating costs of the building. Providing fuel, electricity, maintenance, water and sewer to Maudrey J. Sommer School cost more than 30% of the funds available to the district. The district employs only one maintenance man and one custodian. Likewise, there is nothing left to cut from administration. TCSD employs one chief school administrator, who performs the functions of superintendent, principal, special education director and part-time teacher. The current administrator is a retiree who has signed a waiver for the TRS system; she works for less than two-thirds the average Alaskan superintendent's salary. Accounting functions are being localized, a process that will minimize those costs, reducing them to a fraction of the cost of an external accounting contract.

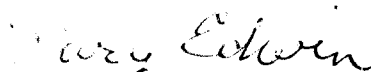
There is certainly no fat in the costs for teachers. Every teacher teaches multi-level, combined classes.

Any further reduction in number of teachers would be very harmful to the education of the students. According to information from NEA, the TCSD salary scale is in the lower half of salary scales across the state. Nor are there aide positions to cut.

In summary, TCSD has done very well, helping the Maudrey J. Sommer School students to achieve adequate yearly progress, with minimum funding. Local control and local support have made that possible. (The failure of the district as a whole to make adequate yearly progress lies in the fact that it was not possible to test enough of the students in the district's statewide correspondence program.) Consolidation would actually cost more, since some of the cost-cutting measures currently in place would not be available to a consolidated system. Local contribution would not be likely to increase. It is more likely that it would decrease to the minimum required, since local incentive to contribute more would not longer be felt by the residents of Tanana.

Until a full reply can be drafted by the TCSD Board of Education and the Tanana City Council, please consider the points presented.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Edwin".

Mary Edwin

Chief School Administrator